National Historic Landmarks Survey

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Landmarks that Transformed Education
Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the United States

Central High School's "Little Rock Nine" and Daisy Bates Posed in Living Room (Library of Congress, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Collection, LC-USZ62-119154 DLC).

A National Historic Landmark Theme Study Update
May 17, 2004

On May 17, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court proclaimed that "in the field of public education 'separate but equal' has no place." This ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* overturned the separate but equal doctrine that was based on the Court's 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision that separate facilities for blacks were constitutional as long as they were equal to those facilities for whites. This ruling was a watershed in the protracted judicial battle waged by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and many communities to bring a legal end to state-sanctioned school segregation. The landmark decision raised the nation's consciousness about school segregation and fueled the modern civil rights movement that would soon force the federal government to take action on behalf of racial democracy. As author Richard Kluger describes in the definitive history of *Brown*:

> Probably no case ever to come before the nation's highest tribunal affected more directly the minds, hearts, and daily lives of so many Americans. . . . The decision marked the turning point in the nation's willingness to face the consequences of centuries of racial discrimination.[1]

In recognition of the fiftieth anniversary of the *Brown* case, the National Park Service presents this compendium of places associated with the century long struggle to desegregate schools that were identified in the National Historic Landmarks theme study, "Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the U.S." Authorized by Congress, the study tells the story behind this extraordinary social and legal achievement that transformed education in America and became one of the greatest social movements in this country. As a result of this study, the Secretary of the Interior has designated five National Historic Landmarks that best exemplify and illustrate this history. These sites join six previously designated National Historic Landmarks related to this history. Another seven sites are recommended for further consideration.

The National Park Service is also proud to be the stewards of two units with direct ties to the *Brown* decision: the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site in Topeka, Kansas, and the Central High School National Historic Site in Little Rock, Arkansas. Together with the National Historic Landmarks described in this theme study, these places are the most important physical reminders of the challenges overcome by our ancestors and serve as opportunities to help educate future generations about important struggles in our nation's history.

Hon. Craig Manson
Assistant Secretary of the Interior
for Fish Wildlife and Parks
May 17, 2004

1 Richard Kluger, "Simple Justice" (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), x.

The following properties were designated as NHLs as a result of the Racial Desegregation in Public Education Theme Study.

Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel, Founders Library, and Frederick Douglas Memorial Hall, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Aerial view of Founders Library, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Courtesy of Howard University Library, photograph by Harry G. Robinson, III).

A portion of the Howard University campus is nationally significant as the setting for the institution's role in the legal establishment of racially desegregated public education and for its association with two nationally recognized leaders of that fight: Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall. Beginning in 1929, Howard Law School became an educational training ground for civil rights through the vision of Charles Hamilton Houston. This program produced activist black lawyers dedicated to securing the civil rights of all people of color and, in 1936, established the first course in civil rights law. Thereafter, lawyer Thurgood Marshall, of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Legal Defense Fund (LDF), led the organization's strategy to desegregate schools leading up to the Brown v. Board of Education case. In this case, the U.S. Supreme Court declared school segregation unconstitutional.

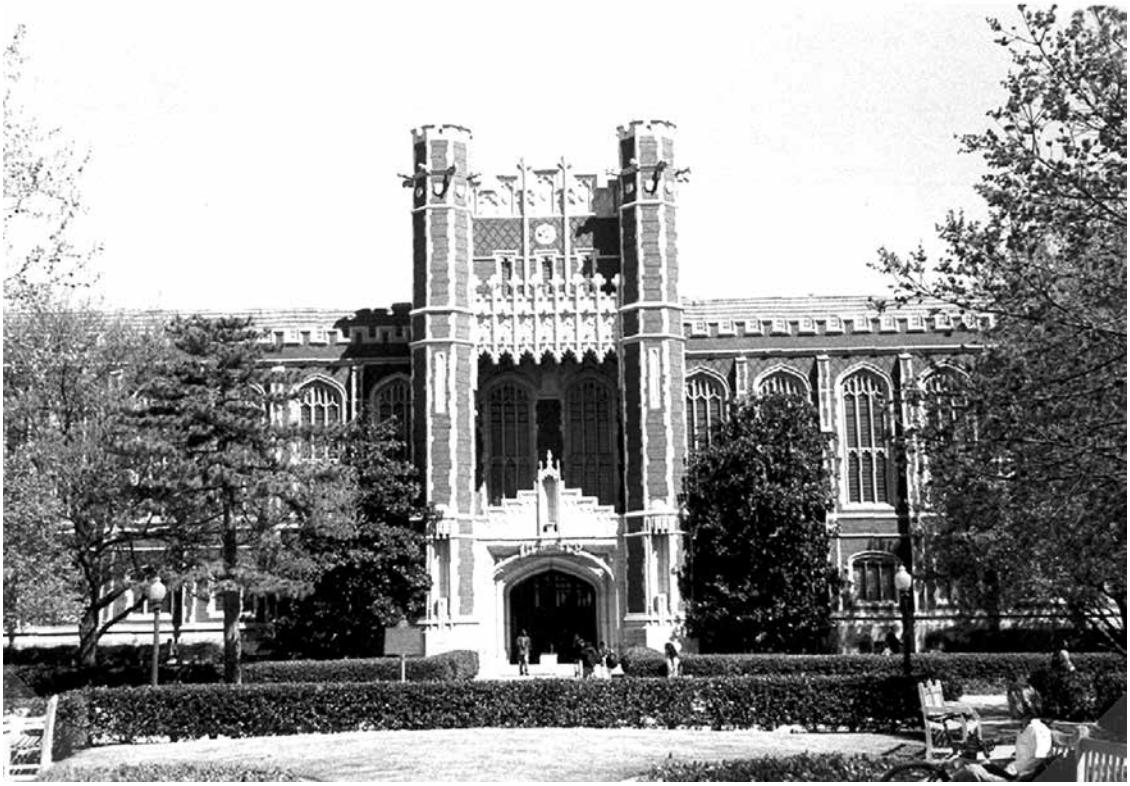
Three buildings contribute to this National Historic Landmark. Founders Library, which housed the law school on its third floor, is where LDF lawyers conducted their practice trials for the Supreme Court cases. Also at this location, Houston taught a course in civil rights law as a part-time professor and was involved in the academic preparation of students who would eventually litigate prominent civil rights cases.

Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel hosted sessions of a two-day conference in April 1952, in which Howard University and the *Journal of Negro Education* convened leading professionals in the fields of psychology, politics, law, sociology, and education, to analyze efforts to desegregate schools. Out of the conference emerged a revitalized commitment to desegregate public education through the courts, and a strategy to address white opposition and logistical problems that might arise from integration.

Frederick Douglass Memorial Hall symbolizes the academic research undertaken in preparation for cases litigated by the NAACP LDF. This building is where Howard University professors and LDF lawyers met to discuss how their research into the harmful effects and infeasibility of the "separate but equal" doctrine weakened the legality of segregation. The buildings were designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior on January 3, 2001.

Frederick Douglas Memorial Hall, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (Courtesy of Howard University, photograph by Mohamed Mekkawi).

Bizzell Library, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma



Bizzell Library, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma (National Historic Landmark photograph).

The University of Oklahoma's Bizzell Library is associated with a crucial aspect of the NAACP LDF's strategy to end public school segregation that became a cornerstone of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown* decision. As part of its early legal strategy, LDF lawyers began attacking school segregation at the professional and graduate school level in the belief that the cost of equalizing these facilities under the "separate but equal" doctrine would be prohibitive. Ruling in *McLaurin v. Oklahoma Board of Regents*, the U.S. Supreme Court found that under the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, "separate but equal" conditions were not feasible in graduate and professional education based on intangible factors.

A retired black professor, George McLaurin, applied to the University of Oklahoma on January 28, 1948, to pursue a Doctorate in Education. School authorities were required to deny him admission solely because of his race under Oklahoma statutes that made it illegal to maintain, operate, teach, or attend a school at which both whites and blacks were enrolled or taught. McLaurin filed suit and a state district court found the Oklahoma statute unconstitutional. Thereafter the university's Board of Regents voted to admit McLaurin, but on a segregated basis. He had to sit separate from other students in his classroom and in the cafeteria. In Bizzell Library he sat at a separate desk on the mezzanine level away from the white students in the Main Reading Room.

NAACP LDF lawyers filed suit and eventually appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. The case attracted attention from the executive branch of government. In a memorandum to the Court, the U.S. Department of Justice cited the importance of the case in testing "the vitality and strength of the democratic ideals to which the United States is dedicated" and urged the Court to renounce the "separate but equal" doctrine.[2] The Court found that McLaurin's segregation made him "handicapped in his pursuit of effective graduate instruction" and that "[s]uch restrictions impair and inhibit his ability to study, to engage in discussion and exchange views with other students, and in general to learn his profession."[3]

In reaching its decision the Court found that intangible factors such as "intellectual commingling" with other students, were essential to an equitable education. These factors played a role four years later in the *Brown* decision when the Court cited its earlier finding in the *McLaurin* case that intangible factors in education prohibited the possibility of the "separate but equal" doctrine. The Secretary of the Interior designated Bizzell Library a National Historic Landmark on January 3, 2001.

Bizzell Library, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma, Main Reading Room (National Historic Landmark photograph).

2 *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents, et al.* U.S. Supreme Court Records & Briefs, Case No. 34, Memorandum for the United States as Amicus Curiae.
3 *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents, et al.*, 399 U.S. 637 at 641 (1950).

John Philip Sousa Junior High School, Washington, D.C.

John Philip Sousa Junior High School, Washington, D.C. (National Historic Landmark photograph).

The John Philip Sousa Junior High School (now the John Philip Sousa Middle School) is associated with the struggle to desegregate schools in the nation's capitol as part of the *Bolling v. Sharpe* court case. The U.S. Supreme Court decided this case on the same day as the public school segregation cases in Kansas, Virginia, Delaware, and South Carolina combined in *Brown v. Board of Education*. The Bolling case was an integral part of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision that neither the federal or state governments could maintain racially segregated schools.

On September 11, 1950, in a carefully planned maneuver, twelve black school children, along with a police escort and lawyers, presented themselves for admission to the brand new all-white John Philip Sousa Junior High School. Their denial for admission formed the grounds to legally challenge federally segregated schools in the District of Columbia. The decision to challenge segregation itself in this case, rather than the issue of equal facilities, proved promising in light of the Supreme Court's recent decision that intangibles were part of the equality determination. To prepare for the case, faculty at Howard University conducted a massive extracurricular project.

In a unanimous opinion Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote, "In view of our decision that the Constitution prohibits the states from maintaining racially segregated public schools, it would be unthinkable that the same Constitution would impose a lesser duty on the Federal Government."[4] Full support of the Court's decision for the immediate desegregation of the District's schools for the upcoming fall term came from President Eisenhower, who had pledged to end segregation in the Capitol in his 1952 campaign. To monitor progress, the President personally asked for weekly reports.

As a result, the District's schools opened with mixed classes and faculty in September 1954, prior to the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown II* (1955) that mandated schools to desegregate "with all deliberate speed." The school now stands as a symbol of the lengthy conflict that ultimately led to the racial desegregation of schools by the federal government and marked the beginning of the modern civil rights movement. John Philip Sousa Junior High School was designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior on August 7, 2001.

John Philip Sousa Junior High School, Washington, D.C. (National Historic Landmark photograph).

4 347 U.S. 497 at 500.

Daisy Bates House, Little Rock, Arkansas

Daisy Bates House, Little Rock, Arkansas, Thanksgiving Dinner, 1957 (National Historic Landmark photograph, courtesy of Will Counts).

The Daisy Bates House is nationally significant for its role as the *de facto* command post for the Central High School desegregation crisis in Little Rock and its association with Daisy Bates who was at the forefront of black community efforts to desegregate the school. The house served as a haven for the nine African-American students who desegregated the school and a place to plan the best way to achieve their goals. This event marks a milestone in the history of school desegregation when, for the first time, a U.S. President used federal powers to uphold and implement a federal court ruling regarding school desegregation.

Activists Daisy Bates and her husband, Lucius Christopher (L.C.) Bates, resided in this house and had founded the *Arkansas State Press*, a weekly newspaper published "on the conviction that a newspaper was needed to carry on the fight for Negro rights as nothing else can."[5] Because of her position as President of the Arkansas State chapter of the NAACP, Ms. Bates became the official liaison between the students and the Little Rock School Board during the crisis. The Bates newspaper chronicled the school desegregation battle and became involved in a legal battle waged by the NAACP LDF to accelerate desegregation as proposed in a new school board plan.

5 Daisy Bates, The Long Shadow of Little Rock, rpt. (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1986): 34 and 47.

Using the provisions of this new plan, nine black students, who would become known as the "Little Rock Nine," gained admission into Central High School for the 1957-58 school year. Tensions escalated in the community as white segregationists voiced their intentions to resist school desegregation. In defiance of segregation, Governor Orval Faubus cited the potential for violence and called out the National Guard to prevent the nine students, who were greeted by a hostile white crowd, from entering the school. In response, President Eisenhower, who viewed the event as a constitutional crisis, mobilized the Army and federalized the Arkansas National Guard. On September 25, 1957, the Arkansas National Guard escorted the Little Rock Nine into Central High School and remained there for their protection during the school year.

Throughout this crisis and during the 1957-1958 school year, the Little Rock Nine used the Bates House as a planning place, an official daily pick-up and drop-off point, and a place to be counseled and consoled. Daisy Bates also served as liaison with parents and local and federal officials in planning how desegregation would proceed. The Bates House stands as a symbol of the role of civil rights advocates who fought against legal and social obstacles to educational opportunity for African-American youth during a period of southern massive resistance to desegregation. The Daisy Bates House was designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior on January 3, 2001.

Daisy Bates House, Little Rock, Arkansas (National Historic Landmark photograph).

New Kent Middle School and George W. Watkins School, New Kent County, Virginia

New Kent School, 1930 Building, New Kent County, Virginia (National Historic Landmark photograph).

The New Kent School and the George W. Watkins School are associated with the most significant public school desegregation case the U.S. Supreme Court decided after *Brown v. Board of Education*. The 1968 *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County* decision set the standards that judges would use to determine whether school districts were in constitutional compliance in school segregation cases. Thus, a decade of massive resistance to school desegregation in the South from 1955-1964, was replaced by an era of massive integration from 1968-1973, as the Court placed an affirmative duty on school boards to integrate schools.

After passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which authorized the federal government to withhold funds from segregated schools, the New Kent County School Board adopted its "Freedom of Choice Plan" whereby students entering the first and eighth grades chose which school to attend. In theory the plan should have desegregated formerly black schools. However, after three years the Freedom of Choice Plan in New Kent County proved ineffective. Only 155 African-American students attended the New Kent School and 85% of the African-American student population attended the still segregated Watkins School. As the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reported, freedom of choice plans failed because of factors such as retaliation and hostility from the white community, and threats of violence.

With a segregated school system still in place, the New Kent County branch of the NAACP filed suit. In the Green case, the U.S. Supreme Court found that the county had been operating a dual system of schools as ruled unconstitutional in Brown; one that extended beyond student assignments down to "every facet of school operations—faculty, staff, transportation, extracurricular activities and facilities."[6] The Court stated that the board had to convert immediately from a dual system of a "white school" and a "black school," to a unitary system of "just schools." The Green decision ushered in an era of massive integration in public schools across the South as school districts had to address the six "Green" factors to attain a unitary status.

The New Kent School and the George W. Watkins School were designated a National Historic Landmark by the Secretary of the Interior on August 7, 2001. An online lesson plan, "New Kent School and the George W. Watkins School: From Freedom of Choice to Integration," is available online through the Teaching with Historic Places (TwHP) web-site (https://www.nps.gov/subjects/teachingwithhistoricplaces/index.htm).

George W. Watkins School, New Kent County, Virginia (National Historic Landmark photograph).

Yearbook Photograph of Integrated Student Government Body, New Kent High School, New Kent County, Virginia (National Register of Historic Places, Teaching with Historic Places photograph, courtesy of New Kent County Schools, Virginia).

6 *Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*, 391 U.S. 430 (1968), at 437.

Sites Recognized Prior To 2000

Smith School, Boston, Massachusetts – Boston African American National Historic Site

This school represents the pivotal point in legally mandated school segregation when the Massachusetts Supreme Court established the separate but equal principle in *Roberts v. City of Boston* (1849). This principle directly influenced the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) that allowed separate but equal under the Constitution. Located in a pre-civil war free black community, and part of the Boston African American National Historic Site, Smith School was the all-black school associated with this first legal challenge to school segregation. The Boston African American National Historic Site was established on October 10, 1980.

Smith School, Boston, Massachusetts (Boston African-American National Historic Site photograph, courtesy of Museum of Afro-American History, https://www.nps.gov/boaf/learn/historyculture/abiel-smith-school.htm).

Charles Sumner House, Boston, Massachusetts

Home of white abolitionist and attorney Charles Sumner who, along with Boston's first black attorney, Robert Morris, argued for equal education in *Roberts v. City of Boston*. Sumner concluded that separate could never be inherently equal and that segregation marked a race as inferior. Such an argument would not be made again for another century in the NAACP's professional and graduate school cases in 1950 and again in the school segregation cases consolidated in the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 that overturned the separate but equal doctrine. The Charles Sumner House was designated a National Historic Landmark on November 7, 1973.

Charles Sumner House, Boston, Massachusetts (National Historic Landmark photograph).

Lincoln Hall, Berea College, Madison County, Kentucky

A private school founded in 1855, Berea College was the first college established in the U.S. for the specific purpose of educating black and white students together. In 1904 the Kentucky state legislature mandated that black and white students could only be taught simultaneously if they were taught twenty-five miles apart. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the state's right to pass laws to regulate state chartered private institutions on the basis of race, thus lending additional credence to do the same for public schools. This is the only instance in which the U.S. Supreme Court upheld school segregation in higher education. Lincoln Hall was designated a National Historic Landmark on December 2, 1974.

Lincoln Hall, Berea College (Photograph from National Register of Historic Places Online Itinerary "We Shall Overcome, Historic Places of the Civil Rights Movement," courtesy of Berea College).

Sumner and Monroe Elementary Schools, Topeka, Kansas – Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site

Monroe Elementary School (National HistoricLandmark photograph).

Sumner Elementary School (National Historic Landmark photograph).

These two schools represent the NAACP case in Topeka, Kansas. They are among the twelve schools listed in the court case. Sumner Elementary School was cited as the segregated white school at which Oliver Brown was denied the right to enroll his daughter Linda. Monroe Elementary School was the segregated black school to which his daughter was assigned. This case became one of the four public school segregation cases consolidated in *Brown v. Board of Education* before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954 that overturned the "separate but equal" doctrine in public education. Sumner and Monroe Elementary Schools were designated National Historic Landmarks on May 4, 1987. Monroe Elementary was subsequently designated a National Historic Site on October 26, 1992.

Robert Russa Moton High School, Farmville, Virginia

Moton High School was the run down high school where its students initiated a strike for equal facilities and subsequently filed suit against school desegregation. It was among the school segregation cases consolidated in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) before the U.S. Supreme Court case that struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine governing public school policy. Subsequently, it is associated with Virginia's efforts at "massive resistance" to school integration when Prince Edward County closed its public schools. Moton High School was designated a National Historic Landmark on August 5, 1998.

Robert R. Moton Conference Center (National Historic Landmark photograph).

Central High School, Little Rock, Arkansas – Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site

Central High School stands as the first test of national resolve under the Eisenhower administration to enforce black civil rights in the face of massive southern defiance during the period following the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. On September 25, a day after President Eisenhower issued Executive Order 10730, the "Little Rock Nine" marched into Little Rock High School under the protection of federal troops and the Arkansas National Guard. The President upheld the stipulations in the Fourteenth Amendment as the nine students desegregated Little Rock High School despite the need for federal intervention. Little Rock Central High School was designated a National Historic Landmark on May 20, 1982 and thereafter as a National Historic Site on November 6, 1998.

Little Rock Central High School (Courtesy of Tod Swiecichowski).

Sites Recommended for Further Consideration

- *Howard High School, Wilmington, Delaware*
  Howard High School is linked with one of the public school segregation cases combined in *Brown v. Board of Education* and is therefore associated with the landmark decision that struck down the "separate but equal" doctrine governing public policy with regard to race. In this case, a group of black parents requested that the school board allow their children to attend the all-white school within walking distance of their homes, rather than busing their children to the all-black Howard High School. Howard High School is scheduled for consideration at the fall 2004 meeting of the National Park System Advisory Board's Landmarks Committee.

- *Foster Auditorium, University of Alabama*
  Foster Auditorium is the site of the June 11, 1963 "stand in the schoolhouse door" by Governor George Wallace in defiance of a proclamation by President John F. Kennedy to obey a court order to admit two African-American students to the university. The auditorium is a symbol of southern massive resistance to school desegregation following the 1954 *Brown* decision and the call by the Kennedy administration for a stronger federal commitment to civil rights that became the foundation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Foster Auditorium is scheduled for consideration at the fall 2004 meeting of the National Park System Advisory Board's Landmarks Committee.

- *Summerton High School, Summerton, South Carolina*
  This is the only school still standing of the five schools in Clarendon County School District #22 associated with the consolidation of the school segregation cases before the U.S. Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* that overturned the separate but equal doctrine in public education. Summerton High School was also involved in *Briggs v. Elliott*, that dealt with the subsequent enforcement of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

- *Lyceum, University of Mississippi*
  The Lyceum Building is the symbol of the Kennedy administration's stance in enforcing the U.S. Constitution and black civil rights over Mississippi's refusal to integrate the university in 1962. The showdown at the Lyceum is associated with the admittance of African-American student, James Meredith, and resulted in two deaths.

- *U.S. Post Office and Court Building, Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, Richmond, Virginia*
  U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit, New Orleans, Louisiana and Atlanta, Georgia
  These courts played a prominent role in the status of school desegregation implementation during southern mass resistance following the *Brown* decision.

For more information on the properties discussed in the 2004 update to the Racial Desegregation of Public Education in the United States theme study, please visit the NPS's National Historic Landmarks web-site at https://www.nps.gov/nhl. Nomination forms for all properties designated as a result of this study are available on our web-site.